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Bill sponsor offers opinion about news of license-plate veto

Lansing — The governor's veto of a bill that would have created sensible, market-based rules for new specialty fund-raising plates and allowed for the continuation of current fund-raising plates was unwarranted, Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton, said today. Moreover, the veto is a blow to Michigan charities and education.

"Specialty plates have already raised millions of dollars for Michigan's public universities and efforts to help children, protect wildlife and ensure water quality, among others," Patterson said.

A standardized, uniform plate developed under current law ensures that confusion with multiple plates from other states is mitigated. Specialty plates follow a standard format that clearly identifies them with the word 'MICHIGAN' across the top of the plate.

"Our specialty plates are easily distinguishable from the plates of other states," Patterson said. "Law enforcement officers are correct that they need the ability to distinguish which plate is from which state, but that's already been addressed by Michigan's uniform license-plate format."

Senate Bill 785 established uniform rules for adding and removing specialty license plates. It also repealed the sunset date for current specialty fund-raising plates. With the veto, the future of current fund-raising plates is in jeopardy, as they will become invalid after Oct. 1, 2005.

The governor has suggested she would approve a bill eliminating the sunset but does not want the program expanded. Patterson said he is concerned the governor is not listening to the public because people are calling for an opportunity to support their causes and now they won't get that chance.

The legislation would have required the plate's sponsoring organization to pay \$15,000 to cover start-up costs, saving taxpayers' money. At least 2,000 would have to be sold in the first year and 500 new plates each additional year. Those new plates would provide \$25 to the sponsoring organization for each plate sold, just as the existing plates do for universities and other causes.

The legislation drew strong support from Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land. Additionally, supporters of Michigan causes from education to breast-cancer research have supported the effort.